



Rhode Island Department of Health

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For ASL version, click local TV stations:

ABC6 <https://www.abc6.com/20-total-cases-of-covid-19-in-ri/>

NBC10 <https://turnto10.com/news/coronavirus/raimondo-to-hold-coronavirus-briefing>

FOX11 <https://www.wpri.com/health/coronavirus/ri-coronavirus-update-noon-mar-14/>

CBS12 <https://www.wpri.com/health/coronavirus/ri-coronavirus-update-noon-mar-14/>

Deaf Interpreter: Charley Thorn; ASL Interpreter: Rayne Depukat

New Insurance Initiatives Announced as Part of COVID-19 Response

Six additional cases of COVID-19 confirmed in Rhode Island

Governor Gina M. Raimondo announced today that new guidance has been issued to health insurers related to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), and that HealthSource RI is opening a special enrollment period to allow Rhode Islanders to purchase coverage. Both of these measures are intended to ensure access and continuity of care during the COVID-19 State of Emergency.

“As we continue to respond to COVID-19, we are doing everything possible to make sure people can access the care they need, while doing it in a way that minimizes exposure for the healthcare workers who are critical to our response,” said Governor Raimondo. “While these measures are being taken at the state level, it is critical that people continue taking personal health measures such as staying home when sick and avoiding large crowds.”

These announcements are being made as the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) is announcing six additional presumptive positive COVID-19 cases. Four of those individuals are males. Two of them are females. Their age range is from someone in their 30s to someone in their 70s. Because these results came in late last night, RIDOH is still investigating each case. However, it is known that at least three of these individuals reported recent travel: two separate domestic trips, and one trip to Lisbon. All six people are recovering at home.

Governor Raimondo and Rhode Island Health Commissioner Marie Ganim announced today new guidance for health insurers, which includes instructions to:

- Update telemedicine policies to include telephone-only services for primary care and behavioral health providers.
- Ensure testing and screening for COVID-19 can be done without prior authorization and without any cost to the patient.
- Cover prescription refills even if the prescription has yet to run out, provided that the prescription itself would remain valid beyond the refill date. This will allow people to shelter in place, while ensuring that they have adequate supplies on hand for continuity of care and medication compliance.
- Work to remove barriers to access to services related to COVID-19 that may delay necessary care, including requirements for specialist referrals and prior authorizations.
- In the event a federally-approved vaccine becomes available for COVID-19, cover the cost of the immunization for all enrollees.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, health insurers should continually assess their readiness, plan for network adequacy challenges, make any necessary adjustments, and keep their providers and subscribers informed. The complete list of instructions for health insurers is attached.

Additionally, HealthSource RI is opening a special enrollment period to allow Rhode Islanders to purchase coverage. The special enrollment period will be open from this coming Monday through April 15. For anyone who is concerned that they need to be tested for coronavirus -- or anyone who is seeking care because of coronavirus exposure -- coverage will start retroactively.

On Friday, Governor Raimondo announced that school vacation week in Rhode Island is being moved from April to the week of March 16th. During this time, teachers and other school staff are urged to remain local. The change in school vacation week is to limit spread of COVID-19 while allowing schools and districts to work with the Rhode Island Department of Education on their distance learning plans. It will also allow schools and districts to prepare to make meals available to at-risk students where possible, in the event we need to move to distance learning. Schools should also use next week to clean and disinfect all surfaces in their buildings. A decision will be made at the end of next week about what to do the following week.

Data updates

These numbers are also [available online](#).

- Number of Rhode Island COVID-19 positive (including presumptive positive) cases: 20

- Number of people who had negative test results at RIDOH's State Health Laboratories: 198
- Number of people for whom tests are pending: 57
- Number of people who are currently instructed to self-quarantine in Rhode Island because they had direct contact with a person with COVID-19: approximately 600

Testing in Rhode Island is being done at RIDOH's State Health Laboratories. Confirmatory testing is being done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Positive results are considered 'presumptive' if they still need to be confirmed by the CDC.

Key messages for the public

- If you have traveled anywhere internationally in the last 14 days, self-quarantine for 14 days. That means do not go to work or school and stay at home.
- Avoid all crowded places, large events, and mass gatherings. This is social distancing. However, people should continue doing essential errands (such as going to the grocery store).
- Whenever possible, avoid close personal contact with people in public. When greeting people avoid handshakes and hugs. [Additional guidance](#) is available from CDC.
- Although Rhode Island has the testing capacity it needs, people without symptoms should not be tested for COVID-19. Testing individuals with no symptoms is not recommended by CDC.
- People who think they have COVID-19 should call their healthcare provider. These people should not go directly to a healthcare facility without first calling a healthcare provider (unless they are experiencing a medical emergency). Healthcare providers have a dedicated number that they are then using to consult with RIDOH on potential COVID-19 cases.
- Early data suggest that older adults are twice as likely to experience serious COVID-19 illness. RIDOH is reiterating CDC's guidance for people older than 60 years of age:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - When greeting people avoid handshakes and hugs.
 - Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home.
 - Pay attention for potential COVID-19 symptoms including, fever, cough, and shortness of breath. If you feel like you are developing symptoms, call your doctor.
 - More information is [available from CDC](#).

- People with general, non-medical questions about COVID-19 can visit www.health.ri.gov/covid, write to RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov, or call **401-222-8022**. **This is the COVID-19 Hotline** that RIDOH has available to the public. The Hotline will be staffed this weekend from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm both Saturday and Sunday. (After hours people are being directed to call 211.)
- Everyone can help stop the spread of viruses in Rhode Island.
 - Get your flu shot, and make sure the people around you do the same.
 - Wash your hands often throughout the day. Use warm water and soap. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Viruses can spread by coughing or sneezing on other people or into your hands.
 - Stay home from work or school if you are sick.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs spread this way.